

us with the minerals used for the very weapons we will be using to defend ourselves from them. Once again, H.R. 2262 is bad policy.

I urge my colleagues to vote "no."

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3½ minutes to the distinguished chairman of our Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, my good friend, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA).

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2262.

It is an understatement to say that the West has changed dramatically since 1872, but this law that we are reforming today has not kept pace. Those of us from the West need this legislation to pass to protect the health of our communities, our scarce water supplies and our public lands, which are under continuing threat from an outdated mining law.

In my home State of Arizona, hardrock mining has left behind a legacy of contaminated lands and rivers, abandoned mines leaching poisonous metals into groundwater and other hazards to the public, with hundreds upon hundreds of millions of dollars to reclaim and cleanup the mess left behind.

Only a few months ago, a young girl was killed when she and her sister drove their vehicle into a mine shaft that had been left exposed after the site was abandoned. The mine shaft was hidden by brush, had no signs or barriers to warn anyone about the danger. The younger sister was trapped overnight with her sister's body before rescuers found them the next morning.

This is just one heartbreaking example of the impacts of a law left over from another era, an era when the West was not populated and when our value system was far different from what it is now.

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The law simply must be updated to today's modern-day values and environmental standards. The issue of employment has been raised over and over again, exporting our jobs and importing our vital metals. I agree, mining jobs are good jobs, but I would suggest they are not the only jobs in the West. We need to have a diversified workforce, and that workforce needs what the population needs, diversified opportunities.

Chairman RAHALL's bill puts standards in place, requiring cleanup and reclamation of mining sites. This bill makes certain that lands are off limits to mining, as they should be, but it also ends the free-for-all that this law has created over the years, where companies have used a patenting process to purchase inholdings within national forests and other public lands for a few dollars per acre, only to have the Federal Government later buy them out for millions of dollars when they threaten to develop the land.

The Federal Government has spent billions of dollars over the years re-

buying patented mining lands, and taxpayers' are served much better for their money. They deserve a fairness and an equitable return for their tax dollars.

I strongly support the balanced approach that the chairman has taken with this bill. I am also pleased that the committee approved amendments I offered to allow Native American tribes to petition the Secretary to withdraw from mining lands of cultural, historic or religious importance to them. Tribes have been just as impacted as other communities by the impacts of mining and should be able to weigh in on these important matters.

There is an urgency here that cannot be understated. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will vote for this bill.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Chairman, I would recognize the comments by the gentleman from West Virginia earlier about the administration, and I appreciate his praise.

Although I don't always agree with the administration, I would say that the same administration he was praising has issued a veto threat because there is a constitutional abridgement that's possible in this bill, a takings violation, from the royalty structure. That would be a violation of the fifth amendment of the Constitution.

I believe that this work in progress should be sent back to the committee.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) who has done great work on the bill.

Mr. HELLER of Nevada. I want to thank the ranking member for his hard work the last 10 months.

I also want to thank the chairman of the committee, Mr. RAHALL, for his efforts on the bill. He was very patient, very respectful. I appreciate his time and energy. We may disagree, but I certainly do appreciate him listening to my concerns and oppositions to this particular bill, so thank you so much.

Also, I thank the subcommittee chairman for a field hearing in Elko, Nevada. I certainly do appreciate that also, giving them a chance to be heard. I know that was appreciated.

Mr. Chairman, mining is the second largest industry in the State of Nevada, which employs approximately 32,000 Nevadans, supporting, obviously, countless numbers of families. These high-paying jobs and their related services are the backbone of the rural community in our State and other rural economies.

I would take, for example, a couple, Larry and Vickie Childs of Spring Creek, Nevada. Larry retired from the mining industry approximately 25 years ago and subsequently went to work for a company in Elko, Nevada, providing miners the tools and equipment that they need. Vickie works at a health clinic for miners and their families provided by the two largest mining companies in the area.

Vickie's clinic employs two pharmacists, four doctors, physician's assistants, nurses, lab technicians, maintenance and clerical people. Larry and Vickie raised four children in Elko, Nevada, one of whom currently today works in the mining industry.

When this bill closes down the local mining operations, the equipment suppliers and the health care clinics will have layoffs, and, obviously, close their doors. The Childs family will begin to lose their homes. The mining industry will join other domestic industry crushed by foreign competition and overregulation.

Despite opposition to this bill in Elko, one of the most affected communities by this bill, the new excessive taxes and burdensome regulations of this bill will kill this industry, and with that industry will go the towns and families that depend upon it.

Clearly, this was not the result of the field hearing that the community had hoped for. All of these measures, many of the supporters will say, are in the name of fairness.

The question is, fairness to whom? Fairness to Nevada? Fairness to New Mexico? Arizona? I know that China thinks it's fair. I would guess that South Africa thinks that this is a fair bill. I would probably even guess that Australia thinks it is a fair bill.

But do you think it's a fair bill to the Childs family in Spring Creek and the many thousands like them? I don't think so.

But just like this bill ignores the futures of the families in Nevada, H.R. 2262 also fails to embrace the realities of the future of our Nation. India and China, with their State-funded purchases of global mineral commodities, should make us consider the long-term ramifications of the health of the domestic mining industry. Also, the technological advances we all want in our future, such as alternative energy, rely heavily on minerals and metals. A hybrid car, for example, requires twice as much copper as a traditional SUV today.

Our national defense will rely on foreign sources of minerals to build our military equipment. Frankly, I don't want to rely on China when we are in a war-time situation.

I urge my colleagues to support rural communities, urge them to support our domestic mining industry for the sake of our families, our economy, and our national security by voting against H.R. 2262.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1½ minutes to our distinguished subcommittee Chair on Insular Affairs, the gentlelady from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN).

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2262, the Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2007.

In doing so, I want to congratulate its lead sponsor, the chairman of the Committee on Natural Resources, NICK RAHALL. For 20 years now, NICK has led